

LEGISLATURE

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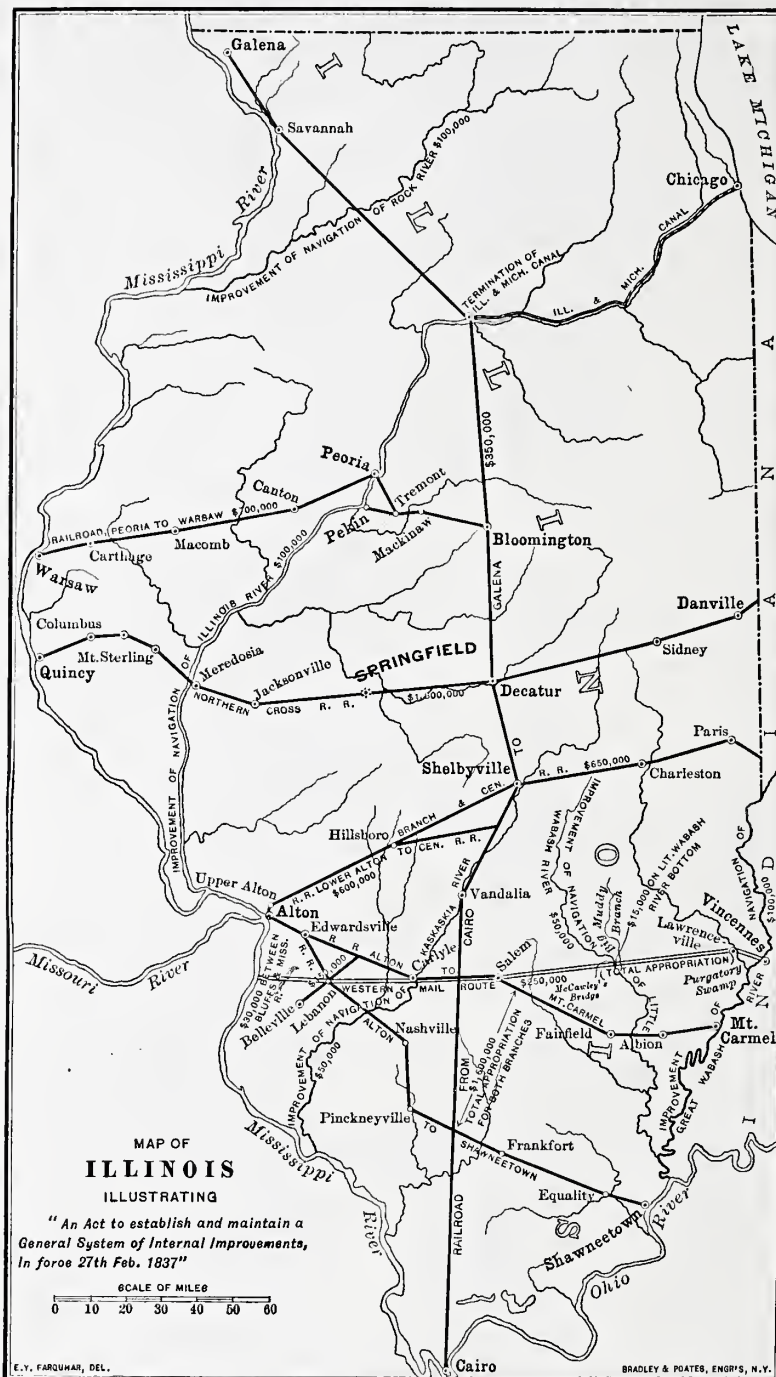
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Abraham Lincoln Before 1860

Illinois Legislature
1834 – 1842

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



When the Illinois legislature adopted the above plan of internal improvement in 1837, there was in the whole United States only about eleven hundred miles of railroad. The above scheme provided for thirteen hundred and fifty. The basis of the outlines used by the committee in developing the plan was contained in a series of resolutions offered in the beginning of the session by Stephen A. Douglas. In the house the vote on the bill stood sixty-one in favor to twenty-five against.

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LINCOLN LORE

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RESEARCH
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Dr. Louis A. Warren - - - Editor

THE LONG NINE

No group with which Abraham Lincoln became affiliated in his younger days has gained more prominence than the "long nine." Its most notable achievement was the winning of the state capital of Illinois for the city of Springfield.

Sangamon County in 1836 elected seven representatives and two senators to the Legislature, the largest delegation from any county in the state. These nine men were not only bound together because of their local political interests, but each one of them was six feet tall or over, which gave them the name of the "long nine." The combined height of the group is said to have been fifty-five feet.

The seven successful candidates for the House of Representatives received the following number of votes: Abraham Lincoln, 1716; William F. Elkin, 1694; Ninian W. Edwards, 1659; John Dawson, 1641; Daniel Stone, 1483; Robert L. Wilson, 1353; Andrew McCormick, 1306. These men, with the two successful candidates to the Senate, Job Fletcher and Archer G. Herndon, comprised the famous "long nine."

On one occasion Lincoln had opportunity to mention from the floor of the legislature the group of which he was a member. Some reference had been made to the figure nine as associated with old women, and Lincoln seized upon this opportunity to turn loose some of his wit. He said:

"A few years since the delegation from this county was dubbed the 'long nine,' and, by way of further distinction I had been called the longest of the nine. Now, if any woman old or young, ever thought there was any peculiar charm in this distinguished specimen of number nine, I have, as yet, been so unfortunate as not to have discovered it." The reporter of the Sangamon Journal in the issue of January 15, 1839, commented that this speech was greeted with "loud applause." As a sequel to this story Miss Mary Todd was soon to discover the peculiar charm of this certain member of the long nine.

Lincoln's leadership in the efforts which resulted in this group bringing the state capital to Springfield, did more for him than any other achievement up to this time. The very day after the victory was gained for Springfield, the Supreme Court at Vandalia presented him with a certificate of admission to the bar of Illi-

nois. One month later than this he took up his residence in Springfield. While the story of his arrival in the city, which was to become the new state capital, has made it appear that he took up his abode there as a rather humble country lad, he was in fact the most honored of the representatives of Sangamon County, due to the ef-

The members of the "long nine" and their ages follow:

John Dawson—45
William F. Elkin—44
Job Fletcher—43
Archer G. Herndon—41
Daniel Stone—37
Andrew McCormick—35
Robert L. Wilson—31
Ninian W. Edwards—28
Abraham Lincoln—28

forts he had put forth in the legislature.

John Dawson

In the 1834 election when Lincoln was first chosen for the legislature, Dawson was the only candidate who received more votes than he. Politically and socially, Dawson and Lincoln, the senior and junior members of the "long nine," had much in common. Dawson was one of the group who joined Lincoln as one of the six managers of the famous "Cotillion Party." He served five terms in the legislature and was a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1847. He was born in Virginia.

William F. Elkin

Inasmuch as Elkin was born in Kentucky it is possible that he may have been related to Rev. David Elkin, the minister who preached the funeral of Nancy Hanks. He served three terms in the legislature and was later registrar of the land office at Springfield.

Job Fletcher

Not much is known about Fletcher with the exception that he served six years in the State Senate and one term in the House of Representatives. He was born in Virginia.

Archer G. Herndon

The association of Lincoln and Archer G. Herndon may have had something to do with the interest which Lincoln took in Herndon's son, William H. Herndon, who later became his law partner. Herndon was born in Virginia, but for many years lived not far from the Kentucky home of the Lincolns. Herndon served eight years in the State Senate and was receiver of the land office.

Daniel Stone

This is the same Dan Stone who joined Abraham Lincoln in the abolition protest and signed the remonstrance with him on March 3, 1837. Possibly the fact that he was born in Vermont may have had something to do with his attitude towards slavery. He served one term in the General Assembly, and was also a Circuit Judge.

Andrew McCormick

McCormick seems to be one of the other rather obscure members of the long nine. His three terms served in the legislature seem to be his full sum of public service. He was born in Tennessee.

Robert L. Wilson

It was Lincoln's association with Robert L. Wilson which undoubtedly was responsible for his later appointment of Wilson as paymaster, where he served at both Washington and St. Louis. He served but one term in the legislature, but was five terms Circuit Judge and eight years a Probate Judge. He was born in Pennsylvania.

Ninian W. Edwards

One member of the "big nine," Ninian W. Edwards, was later to become Abraham Lincoln's brother-in-law. He was born in Kentucky, and while in Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky, had married Mary Todd's sister, Elizabeth. He served in the Legislature sixteen years, was a member of the State Constitutional Convention of 1847, and in 1862 was appointed United States Commissary by Lincoln. Upon his coming to Illinois shortly after his graduation from Transylvania he was appointed Attorney General of Illinois.

Abraham Lincoln

Although Abraham Lincoln was but twenty-eight years old at the time the long nine was serving in the legislature, he became the recognized leader of the group.

If the following tradition can be verified Lincoln was a member of another group for a very short time which would have towered above the "long nine." It is said that on one occasion the Ninety-third Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers was passing through Washington and in the ranks was a very tall young man by the name of Mahlon Shaaber.

Young Shaaber noticed a group of tall men standing together viewing the troops, the tallest of them beckoning him to come to them. The captain of Shaaber's company, recognizing the gentleman as President Lincoln, ordered Shaaber to join the group. Shaaber said that Mr. Lincoln asked him how tall he was and he told him that he was six feet six and one-half inches.

Mr. Lincoln is said to have jotted down these figures in a black memorandum book, remarking, after learning the height of the other men present and noting it in his book, "It will be a good while, I guess, before as small a party as this can show so great a total of inches."

The members of the party were Mahlon Shaaber, six feet six and one-half inches; Abraham Lincoln, six feet four inches; Hannibal Hamlin, six feet two and one-half inches; Governor Curtin, six feet two inches; and General Cameron, six feet one inch.

We are wondering if this group did not bring back to Abraham Lincoln the memory of the "long nine."

SERVED IN LEGISLATURE WITH LINCOLN

Compiled by HERBERT WELLS FAY, Custodian of Lincoln's Tomb.

Abraham Lincoln served in four sessions of the Legislature, in the lower house from 1834 to 1842. The Legislature met for the first time in Springfield, December, 1839. The following is the first list printed alphabetically and comprises about 350 persons. The letter "H" means house and "S" senate. When single date appears after house members names they served but one term of two years. In the official Blue Book there is a diversity of spelling, which this publication may help to correct. Those * pictures have been secured and the others are wanted.

- ✓ Wilson Abel, Alexander. H. 1834-42.
- Mark Aldrich, Hancock. H. 1836-40.
- Harmon Alexander, Crawford. H. 1838.
- James Allen, McLean. S. 1836-38.
- John Allen, Greene. H. 1838.
- John Allen, Greene. Cal. 36-38 40-42.
- Willis Allen, Franklin. H. 1838.
- ✓ Stinson H. Anderson, Jefferson. H. 1834.
- Stinton H. Anderson, Lieut. Gov. 1838-42.
- *Wm. B. Archer, Clark. H. 1838-44.
- Thos. Atwater, Putnam. H. 1836.
- *Wm. W. Bailey, McDonough. H. 1840.
- Allen Bainbridge, Franklin. H. 1838.
- *Edward D. Baker, Sangamon. H. 1836-40
- *Edward D. Baker, Sangamon. S. 1840-44
- Daniel Baldwin, St. Clair. H. 1840.
- Asel F. Ball, Fulton. H. 1836.
- Geo. Barnett, Vermilion. H. 1836.
- Robt. F. Barrett, Macon-DeWitt. H. 1840.
- S. M. Bartlett, Jo Daviess. H. 1836.
- Jas. Beall, Wabash. H. 1840.
- John Bennett, Menard. H. 1840.
- Richard Bentley, Bond. H. 1836.
- Richard Bentley, Bond. H. 1840.
- *Wm. H. Bissell, Monroe. H. 1840.
- ✓ Nathaniel Blackford, White. H. 1834.
- David J. Blackman, Galletin. H. 1840.
- ✓ *Robert Blackwell, Fayette. H. 1834.
- *R. Blackwell, Clay-Effingham. S. 1838.
- ✓ Christian B. Blockbarger, Montgomery. H. 1834.
- ✓ Benjamin Bond, Monroe. S. 1834-36.
- Joseph Borough, Macoupin. S. 1836-38.
- Manoah Boswick, Green. S. 1838.
- Joseph G. Bowman, Wabash. H. 1838.
- ✓ Geo. P. Bowyer, Franklin. H. 1834.
- *Jas. M. Bradford, Sangamon. H. 1840.
- *Jas. N. Brown, Sangamon. H. 1840.
- John Brown, Schuyler. H. 1838-40.
- John J. Brown, Vermilion. H. 1840.
- ✓ Wm. Brown, McLean. H. 1834.
- *Orville H. Browning, Adams. S. 1836-38.
- ✓ Nath. Buckmaster, Madison. H. 1834.
- Mathew W. Busey, Champaign. H. 1840.
- *Peter Butler, Warren. H. 1834.
- *Peter Butler, Warren. S. 1836-40.
- *John Calhoun, Sangamon. H. 1838.
- John Canady, Vermilion. H. 1840.
- ✓ Milton Carpenter, Hamilton. H. 1834-42.
- ✓ Wm. Carpenter, Sangamon. H. 1834.
- Isaac Cartwright, Iroquois. H. 1836.
- Alfred W. Cavalry, Green-Jersey. H. 1840.
- Elijah Charles, Jo Daviess. H. 1836.
- John F. Charles, Hancock. H. 1840.
- Geo. Churchill, Madison. S. 1838-42.
- Joseph W. Churchill, LaSalle. H. 1838.
- ✓ Benjamin A. Clark, Wayne. H. 1834.
- ✓ Newton Cloud, Morgan. H. 1834-40.
- Wm. Compher, Peoria. H. 1838.
- Samuel Connelly, Edgar. H. 1836.
- James Copeland, Johnson. H. 1836.
- Isaac Courtwright, Iroquois. H. 1840.
- Joseph Cox, Morgan. H. 1840.
- ✓ Bazel Craig, Union. H. 1834.
- James Craig, Jo Daviess. H. 1836-40.
- ✓ Larkin Craig, Bond. S. 1834-36.
- John Crain, Washington. H. 1836-42.
- Richard N. Cullom, Tazewell. H. 1836.
- Richard N. Cullom, Tazewell. S. 1840-44.
- ✓ Jas. T. Cunningham, Coles. H. 1834-42.
- Jonathan Dairman, Pope. H. 1836.
- Edward M. Daley, Greene. H. 1838.
- John Darnielle, Sangamon. H. 1840.
- ✓ Wm. H. Davidson, White. S. 1834-38.
- Wm. Davidson, Marion. H. 1836.
- Cyrus A. Davis, Greene. H. 1836.
- ✓ *John Dawson, Sangamon. H. 1834.
- *John Dement, Fayette, Effingham. H. 1836.
- John Denny, Knox. H. 1840.
- Achilles D. Dollins, Franklin. H. 1836-42.
- Abram R. Dodge, LaSalle. H. 1840.
- ✓ John Dougherty, Union. H. 1834.
- John Dougherty, Union. H. 1840.
- *S. A. Douglas, Morgan. H. 1836.
- *Thomas Drummond, Jo Daviess. H. 1840.
- ✓ *Jesse K. Dubois, Lawrence. H. 1834-40.
- Alexander P. Dunbar, Coles. H. 1836.
- *Samuel Dunlap, Lawrence. H. 1840.
- ✓ Charles Dunn, Pope. H. 1834.
- Tarlton Dunn, Galletin. H. 1836-40.
- Wm. Edmonston, McDonough. H. 1836-40.
- ✓ *Cyrus Edwards, Madison. S. 1834-36.
- *Cyrus Edwards, Madison. H. 1840.
- *Ninian W. Edwards, Sangamon. H. 1836-40.
- *Wm. F. Elkin, Sangamon. H. 1836.
- ✓ Asa Elliott, Vermilion. H. 1834.
- Ash Elliott, Vermilion. H. 1838.
- *Allan Emerson, Edwards. H. 1833-44.
- Revel W. English, Greene. H. 1836-44.
- Benjamin S. Enloe, Johnson. H. 1836.
- Akins Evans, Fayette. S. 1840-44.
- ✓ *Wm. L. D. Ewing, Fayette. S. 1834-36.
- *Wm. Lee D. Ewing, Fayette. H. 1836-44.
- Jacob Feaman, Randolph. S. 1840-42.
- ✓ *Orlando B. Ficklin, Wabash. H. 1834.
- *Orlando B. Ficklin, Coles. H. 1838.
- Josiah Fish, Montgomery. H. 1838.

- *Wm. Pithian, Vermilion. H. 1834.
- *Wm. Pithian, Vermilion. S. 1838-46.
- *Job Fletcher, Sangamon. S. 1834-38.
- Wm. G. Flood, Adams. H. 1838.
- Isaac Foeman, Vermilion. H. 1840.
- George Forquer, Sangamon. S. 1834.
- Hardy Foster, Marion. H. 1838.
- Josiah Francis, Sangamon. H. 1840.
- *Elijah S. Frazier, Marion. H. 1834.
- *Augustus C. French, Edgar. H. 1836-40.
- *Isaac Funk, McLean. H. 1849.
- Geo. Gallbreath, Adams. H. 1836.
- Wm. Gaston, Clinton. S. 1838-42.
- Wm. J. Gatewood, Gallatin. S. 1834-42.
- Worthington J. Gibbs, Pope. S. 1838-42.
- William Gilham, Morgan. H. 1838.
- *Joseph Gillespie, Madison. H. 1840.
- Wm. Gordon, Morgan. H. 1834.
- Jesse Wilson Gough, Macon. H. 1838.
- Resolve Graham, Gallatin. H. 1836.
- John Greene, Greene. H. 1836-40.
- Joseph Green, St. Clair. H. 1836.
- Peter Greene, Clay. H. 1836-44.
- Abner Greer, Lawrence. S. 1838.
- Charles Gregory, Greene. H. 1834.
- *Asahel Gridley, McLean. H. 1840.
- Samuel Hackelton, Fulton. H. 1834.
- Samuel Hackelton, Fulton. S. 1836.
- *John S. Hacker, Union-Alexander. S. 1834-42.
- *John Hamlin, Peoria. H. 1834.
- John Hamlin, Peoria. S. 1836-42.
- Wm. J. Hankins, Fayette. H. 1836-44.
- James Hampton, Gallatin. H. 1834.
- W. W. Happy, Morgan. H. 1836-40.
- *John J. Hardin, Morgan. H. 1836-44.
- Moses Harlan, Peoria. H. 1838.
- James Harreld, Jackson. H. 1834.
- *John Harris, Macoupin. H. 1834-40.
- John Harris, Macoupin. S. 1840-48.
- Geo. W. Harrison, Jo Daviess. S. 1838-46.
- *Wm. H. Henderson, Bureau. H. 1838.
- *William H. Henderson, Putnam. H. 1840.
- *John Henry, Morgan. H. 1834-40.
- Geo. Henshaw, McLean. H. 1836.
- *Archer G. Herndon, Sangamon. S. 1834-42.
- Stephen G. Hicks, Jefferson. H. 1840.
- John Hogan, Madison. H. 1836.
- Wm. Holmes, Cass. H. 1838.
- John Houston, Crawford. H. 1838.
- John Houston, Crawford. S. 1840-44.
- *John D. Hughes, St. Clair. H. 1834.
- Joseph Hughey, Clinton. H. 1836.
- Alden Hull, Tazewell. H. 1833-44.
- John G. Humphrey, Adams. H. 1840.
- *Thos. Hunt, Edwards. H. 1834-38.
- *Wm. Hunter, Bond. H. 1834.
- Wm. Hunter, Bond. S. 1838-42.
- Jas. A. James, Monroe. S. 1840-44.
- Vital Jarrot, St. Clair. H. 1838.
- *Alexander M. Jenkins, Lieut.-Gov. 1834.
- Benjamin Johnson, Bond. H. 1838.
- Noah Johnson, Jefferson. S. 1838-42.
- *Gabriel Jones, Randolph. H. 1838.
- *Waller Jones, Morgan. S. 1834.
- John M. Kelley, Edgar. H. 1840.
- Germanicus Kent, Jo Daviess. H. 1838.
- Gholson Kercheval, Cook. H. 1838.
- Richard Kerr, Pike. H. 1833.
- Wickliffe Kitchell, Montgomery. H. 1840.
- Thos. M. Kilpatrick, Scott. S. 1840-48.
- Wilson Lagow, Crawford. H. 1836.
- *Levin Lane, Hamilton. S. 1834-36.
- Wm. Lane, Greene. H. 1836.
- Wm. Laughlin, Adams. H. 1840.
- Albert G. Leary, Cook. H. 1836.
- Albert G. Leary, Cook. H. 1840.
- Sidney H. Little, McDonough. S. 1838-42.
- Harvey Lester, Brown. H. 1840.
- Usher Linder, Coles. H. 1836.
- *Lewis W. Link, Greene. H. 1834.
- *John Logan, Jackson. H. 1836-44.
- Oscar Love, Pike. H. 1838.
- James H. Lyons, Champaign. H. 1836-40.
- Andrew McCormick, Sangamon. H. 1836-40.
- John McCowan, White. H. 1836.
- Jesse M. McCuthen, Schuyler. H. 1838.
- John McDonald, Greene. H. 1840.
- *David McGahey, Crawford. S. 1834.
- *Jas. D. McGahey, Crawford. H. 1834.
- John P. McGinnis, Randolph. H. 1840.
- *Wm. McHenry, White. H. 1834.
- Robt. K. McLaughlin, Schuyler. S. 1836.
- Jas. McLean, Lawrence. H. 1840-42.
- Robert McMillen, Edgar. H. 1838.
- Wm. McMurty, Knox. H. 1836.
- Jas. McWilliams, Pike. H. 1838.
- *Henry Madden, LaSalle. H. 1836.
- Uri Manly, Clark. H. 1834.
- David Markley, Fulton. S. 1838-50.
- Wm. B. Marrs, Clark. H. 1836.
- Samuel D. Marshall, Gallatin. H. 1838.
- Jas. Marshall, Marion. H. 1840-42.
- *Thos. Mather, Randolph. S. 1834.
- Wm. S. Maus, Tazewell. H. 1838.
- *Geo. W. P. Maxwell, Schuyler. S. 1834-36.
- Edmund Menard, Randolph. H. 1838.
- *Pierre Menard, Tazewell. H. 1840.
- *Henry I. Mills, Edwards. S. 1834-38.
- Gideon Minor, Edgar. H. 1836.
- Wm. A. Minshall, Schuyler. H. 1836.
- Wm. A. Minshall, Schuyler. H. 1840.
- *Benjamin Mitchell, Tazewell. S. 1834-38.
- Byrd Monroe, Clark-Coles. S. 1838-42.
- Daniel T. Moore, St. Clair. H. 1840.
- James B. Moore, Madison. S. 1836-38.
- John Moore, McLean. H. 1836-40.
- John Moore, McLean. S. 1840-42.
- *Wm. Moore, St. Clair. H. 1834-38.
- Edward T. Morgan, Monroe. H. 1838.
- Joseph Morton, Morgan. H. 1836.
- Leander Munsell, Edgar. H. 1840.
- John H. Murphy, Vermilion. H. 1836-40.
- Richard Murphy, Cook. H. 1838-42.
- *Richard G. Murphy, Perry. H. 1834-44.
- John Murray, St. Clair. S. 1836-38.
- Thos. J. Nance, Sangamon. H. 1838.
- *Joseph Naper, Cook. H. 1836-40.

(Continued On Page 11)

The Long Nine

"The Long Nine" take a prominent part in the early life of Abraham Lincoln. The Springfield district just prior to the removal of the capitol from Vandalia to Springfield, was represented in the legislature by nine, tall in stature and wide in influence. They were Archie G. Herndon, Job Fletcher, in the senate, and Abraham Lincoln, Ninian W. Edwards, Robert L. Wilson, William F. Elkin, John Dawson, Dan Stone and Andrew McCormick.

We have pictures of all but Archer G. Herndon, father of Mr. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, and that of Andrew McCormick. All that has been said above about the missing pall bearers applies to Herndon and McCormick.

Search for these missing pictures suggest the following:

weeks by weeks 3-2-35

LINCOLN BILL SAVED ILLINOIS FROM DEBT REPUDIATION

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Feb. 12 (I.N.S.).—“Honest Abe” Lincoln, who once trudged six miles to re-

pay a few pennies, is the man responsible for keeping Illinois from joining the company of nations and Commonwealths which have repudiated their debts.

Documents brought to light in the archives division of the office of Secretary of State Edward J. Hughes today—the 128th anniversary of Lincoln's birth—prove this and give credit to Lincoln's statesmanship for solving the State's financial dilemma.

A century ago the State was young and ambitious. A program was adopted by which Illinois was to construct railroads.

So the legislature appropriated upward of \$10,000,000 to finance this program, going to English and American bankers for the money.

Interest Problem

On January 1, 1841, interest on bonds totaling \$100,000 was due and as the State's annual revenue at that time was scarcely more than that amount, Governor Thomas Carlin called the general assembly into special session to devise ways and means of meeting this \$100,000 payment.

When the session started, a flood of cure-all bills were introduced. One of these was sponsored by Lincoln. It provided for a property tax of 40 cents on the \$100 valuation, with the minimum land valuation for such a tax set at \$4 an acre.

The House Finance Committee voted Lincoln's bill out unfavorably.

So the session dragged on and on with nothing done.

March 1, the adjournment dead-

line, was nearing and still nothing had been done.

Then, desperate, the legislators named a committee of nine to hunt a solution. Lincoln was a member of the committee which, after long deliberation, brought in a series of bills, a part of which were passed.

Lincoln's Plan Approved

Chief among those passed was a bill for a property tax levy based on the mill system and it became effective February 7, 1841.

Recent comparison made by the archives department shows that this bill was identical with Lincoln's original tax bill except for two words.

These two words simply changed the amount of the tax from 40 cents to 10 cents on the \$100 valuation and fixed the minimum land value per acre for tax purposes at \$3 instead of \$4 an acre.

Springfield Chosen As Capital In 1837

Action Taken By Illinois General Assembly During Session At Vandalia Was Tremendous Boost For This Small Village Of Century Ago.

Springfield was selected as the permanent capital of the state of Illinois on Feb. 28, 1837. The two houses of the tenth general assembly at Vandalia were in joint session that day in pursuance to an act passed three days previously, to ballot on the capital. Springfield won on the fourth ballot, when this city received seventy-three votes, a majority of all.

In so doing, the legislature overrode a referendum vote of the people in 1834. This vote was taken at the general election that year, in accordance with an act passed in 1833. No place received a majority, but Alton led with 7,511, followed by Vandalia, 7,148, Springfield, 7,044, Jacksonville, Peoria and "the geographical center."

This voting was repealed by the act passed Feb. 25, 1837, under which Springfield was chosen on Feb. 28. The action on these two days climaxed a long strategic campaign by "the Long Nine" delegation from Sangamon county—Archer G. Herndon and Job Fletcher in the senate, Abraham Lincoln, Ninian W. Edwards, John Dawson, Andrew McCormick, Dan Stone, William F. Elkin and Robert L. Wilson in the house.

The 'thirties were an era of internal improvements. The people, Governor John Reynolds, said, were "perfectly insane on the subject." The wildest schemes were in the air—for a gridiron of canals, railroads and pikes criss-crossing the state; for deepening rivers for navigation which, like the Kaskaskia, "wouldn't float a turtle;" and other public works.

The plan was for the state to sell bonds abroad and in the east to finance the improvements. The frenzy found crystallization in a bill to establish and maintain a general system of internal improvements. Every town wanted some improvements, and consequently there was plenty of log-rolling. The Long Nine, however, weren't out after improvements; they were glad to vote for improvements elsewhere if they could trade their votes for votes to make Springfield the capital. And they had nine votes—big block those days.

Led by Lincoln, the Sangamon delegation kept postponing decision locating the capital until the internal improvement act neared



the passage stage. It was passed Feb. 27, 1837, vetoed by Governor Duncan and the council of revision and passed over their veto. Next day Springfield was selected as the capital, and then on March 4 two

supplementary improvement acts were passed to benefit those omitted from the main measure.

Springfield won the capital, but it had to fill the onerous provisions of the act which called for a sub-

scription of \$50,000 by the citizens of the town where the permanent seat of government located. As for the internal improvements, a depression made impossible the sale of bonds to finance them.

Uncover Lincoln's Famous Trapdoor

Springfield, Ill., Nov. 17.—(U.P.)
—A trapdoor, through which Abraham Lincoln once "came dangling down with his long legs" to break up a political meeting, was be-

lieved uncovered today in an old office building.

Chipping plaster from a ceiling, workmen found a large hole. The building once housed Lincoln's law office.

Belief it was the trapdoor which Lincoln used was substantiated by Author Carl Sandberg, Lincoln biographer.

"A riot was started," Sandberg said, "when Lincoln dropped in on the meeting."

*Indeavour, Star
Nov. 16 - 1937*

YOUNG LINCOLN IN LEGISLATURE 100 YEARS AGO

200
Sangamon Representative
Took No Part in Debate
2/12/39 on Birthday

Secretary of State Edward J. Hughes put on his reporter's clothes Saturday and utilizing the historical materials abundantly at hand in the new archives building did a job of covering Abraham Lincoln's birthday of a hundred years ago:

Vandalia, Ill., Tuesday, Feb. 12, 1839.—Abraham Lincoln, representative from Sangamon county in the eleventh general assembly, observed his thirtieth birthday here today at his desk, as usual.

The house convened at the appointed hour in the morning and Mr. Lincoln spent the early hours of the anniversary of his natal day listening to spirited arguments concerning amendments to existing fees for grand and petit jurors. The market was busy in jurors' fees fluctuating between a low of 50 cents to a dollar and a half per diem (at one point it hit the peculiar figure of sixty-two and a

half cents) and closed as of yesterday. Mr. Lincoln did not take part in the debate, but his voting showed him as leaning on the side of economy.

Talk Embezzlement, Liquor

The jurors' fee question having been disposed of for the day Mr. Lincoln and his colleagues turned their attention to other matters, among them a resolution protesting the re-election of one M. McConnell of Morgan county to the board of public works and charging McConnell with embezzlement.

Amendments to the liquor laws were considered. This session of the legislature has revealed a great increase in organized temperance work. Mr. Lincoln did not take part in the discussions and no votes were recorded on the amendments.

Petitions were presented for altering the incorporation act of Juliet, Illinois, and to form a new county out of Coles, Clark, and Jasper counties, and the sad case of Polly Ann Parmely praying for a divorce from Cassius Parmely was ordered under consideration by special committee. On this highly controversial note the house and Mr. Lincoln adjourned for luncheon.

Misses First Vote

The house met again at 2 p.m., but no Mr. Lincoln, who, apparently had lingered long at table thereby missing a chance to vote on an "act concerning public revenue." He reappeared shortly, however, to vote yes on a measure making non-resident taxes payable to the state treasury regardless of whether they were levied for state purposes or by the authority of the county commissioners courts.

The house then adjourned, as did Mr. Lincoln, until 7 p.m., but at 7 p.m. it did not convene. Possibly there was some difficulty in gathering in a quorum.

Believe Trapdoor in Office Building Used By Abraham Lincoln

Springfield, Ill., Nov. 17.—A trapdoor, used by Abraham Lincoln to get to and from a U. S. district courtroom below his office and which bears out a Lincoln story, was believed found today in an old Springfield office building.

Workmen found a large hole yesterday while removing plaster from the ceiling in a building where Lincoln once maintained a law office.

Carl Sandburg in his book, "Abraham Lincoln: Prairie Years," refers to a whig meeting which Lincoln attended after he "came dangling down with his long legs through a hole in the ceiling."

The Sandburg passage says the whig meetings was held in the "courthouse" and it is known that the building housed the U. S. district court from 1840 to 1855. Lincoln's office was in the same building above the courtroom from 1843 to 1849.

Abe Lincoln's 'Short Cut' Revealed

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., Nov. 17.—
(By International News Service.)

—Discovery of a trap door, long since plastered over, today bears out stories of how Abraham Lincoln, when a lawyer here, often scrambled from his third-floor office to the United States District Court room on the floor below.

The hole in the ceiling was found when repairs were being made in the law offices of Hugh Dobbs and Howard Knotts, housed in Springfield's oldest building, built about 1837.

In "Abraham Lincoln: Prairie Years," Carl Sandburg tells how Whigs rented the courtroom one day for a meeting. Lincoln through the hole in the floor listened to speakers charge the Democrats with corruption. A near riot ensued. Lincoln helped to quell it by "Dangling down with his long legs through the hole in the ceiling" and declaring to the crowd that if it took the speaker off the platform "You'll have to take me off too," according to Sandburg.

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Log-Rolling Aided

Backers Of Transportation Bills And "Long Nine"
Traded To Gain Support For Moving Capital Here.

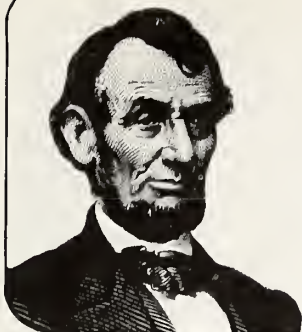
Everyone knows that the moving of the state capital to Springfield was brought about by the efforts of nine men (of whom Lincoln was one) called the "Long Nine." But not everyone knows how closely related this transfer was related to the beginning of the growth of transportation in the state.

Some water navigation was possible but there was much room for improvement, and not all sections of the state had waterways. Railroads were in their infancy, but since Illinoisians recognized their need for some such mode of travel in their inland state, they became interested. Every member of the legislature was at that time concentrating his political efforts upon improving water transportation in his

district or establishing it as a future railroad center—that is, every member except the "Long Nine."

These men had started out to locate the state house in Springfield, and they took advantage of the situation by doing a little "log rolling" to gain their end. Lincoln and his band gave aid, individually and as a body, to various legislators in fighting for transportation, and, in return, gained support for their move-capital-to-Sangamon bill.

The vote that approved the transfer of the capital to Springfield was taken Feb. 28, 1837, one day after "an act to establish and maintain a general system of internal improvements"—of railroad promotion, canal building and river navigation improvements—was passed.



Lincoln Lore

January, 1981

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Mary Jane Hubler, Editorial Assistant. Published each month by the
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Number 1715

The Political Life Of New Salem, Illinois

Lincoln's earliest political surroundings have always somewhat baffled scholars. The reasons for this are many and varied. Inadequate documentation and Whiggery's marginal existence as almost a subculture in Democratic Illinois are two factors. A third, perhaps more important, is the unpopularity of the Whig party among historians. Much of the best work on Lincoln was produced at a time when historians were prejudiced against the Whigs. Most writers liked Lincoln well enough, but they disliked the party to which he devoted the greater part of his political life (he was a Whig twice as long as he was a Republican).

Only recently have historians come to have a greater appreciation for the importance, one might almost say the vision, of the Whig party. G.S. Boritt comes immediately to mind for those who work in the Lincoln field, but there are others, such as Daniel Walker Howe, who have been giving the Whigs a fairer shake. This new work has gained attention and made historians think. It has not yet stemmed the tide, and more students should be reevaluating Lincoln's early political environment.

All in all, the effect of the modern unpopularity of Whiggery on the study of Lincoln's early career has been to keep the number of such studies small and to emphasize Lincoln's personal popularity. Nowhere has this emphasis been more pronounced than in the work on Lincoln in New Salem.

Studies of New Salem rarely focus on the political life of the town in which Lincoln forged his early career. Historians have generally shied away from characterizing the town as Whig or Democratic. Most say only that it was democratic (with a small "d") and that this openness accounts for

Lincoln's opportunity to have a political career despite his "defective" education, his inability to settle into a successful vocation, and his penniless and debt-ridden economic status. The beginnings of Lincoln's career in the Illinois legislature seem to represent a triumph of personal popularity and of the American political system. That it was also a triumph of one political party over another rarely gains mention, much less careful consideration.

Here inadequate documentation is *not* a problem. The opportunity to understand Lincoln's political career before the 1850s is probably greater than for any other of America's political giants. Illinois's voters showed their preference at the polls orally, and clerks carefully marked how each citizen voted. Therefore, we know in Lincoln's case precisely—by name—who voted for him and against him. Knowledge like this is unobtainable even for twentieth-century politicians or contemporary elections. We know for sure who voted for Lincoln, something we can never know in the cases of Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, or even Ronald Reagan.

Who Voted for Lincoln?

The records do not exist for every precinct in every election, but a substantial number have survived. The poll books for the election of August 1, 1836, in New Salem precinct still exist. Lincoln was running for reelection to the Illinois House of Representatives. Sangamon County, of which New Salem was still a part, was to choose seven Representatives, and each voter could vote for as many as seven House candidates. Voters also chose a Congressman, a state senator, and

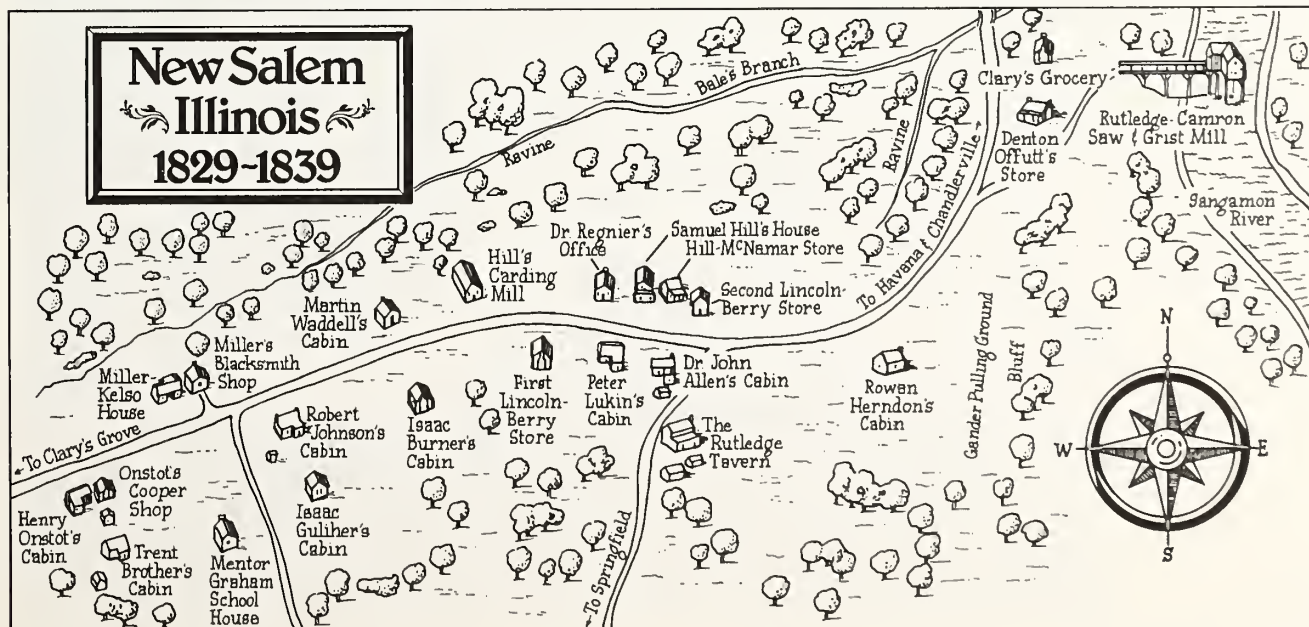


FIGURE 1. Map of Lincoln's home town from 1831 to 1837.

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various county officials. For this election, incidentally, there were two New Salem precinct polling places, a fact not previously mentioned in the literature. Only one of them was in tiny New Salem proper. The other was outside of the town, probably to the west and perhaps to the northwest. Both polling places drew voters from a wide area, and the polling place in New Salem itself attracted many more than the 25 to 50 voters who lived in the town.

The New Salem poll books show that it was a Whig town. John Todd Stuart, the Whig candidate for the United States House of Representatives, gained 86 votes to Democrat William L. May's 59. In the race for the state senate, Whig Job Fletcher outpolled Democrat Moses K. Anderson 73 to 67. In the races for the lower house, five of the seven Whigs gained more votes than any Democrat. Lincoln led the pack with a whopping 107 votes from the 145 voters who came to the polling place. He was followed by William Elkin with 84, Ninian W. Edwards with 84, John Dawson with 82, Dan Stone with 81, Robert L. Wilson with 69, and Andrew McCormick with 67. Lincoln students, of course, recognize these as members of the Long Nine. Thomas Wynne led the unsuccessful Democrats with 71 votes. He was a local man, and no other Democrat topped any Whig's votes in New Salem.

Thus the New Salem poll books also reveal Lincoln's immense local personal popularity, a factor properly noted by historians of the past. One should not ignore the partisan cast of New Salem, however. The peculiar system of voting on many candidates to represent Sangamon County in the legislature allowed for considerable ticket-splitting. Likewise, the rather tentative nature of party formation in Illinois at this date meant that the discipline or regularity of the voters was weaker than it would be in the 1840s, when ticket-splitting became rare. Richard P. McCormick, the outstanding expert on the formation of the Whig and Democratic parties characterizes the party situation in Illinois before 1835 as "chaos." Preparation for the 1836 Presidential election served to coalesce the voters somewhat and saw the Democrats institute a convention system for nominations. The opposition to the Democrats was still only loosely organized and did not put together a modern party organization until about 1840. Thus the degree of party regularity in New Salem was substantial under the conditions. One might say that in 1836 there were about 80 Whigs and about 60 Democrats.

Modern-day visitors to New Salem State Park might get a new feeling about the quaint pioneer village as they meander through it by keeping in mind the Whiggish cast of the town itself. Of course, the reconstructed village does not represent the town at one particular time. It represents a sort of average of a six-year period. Different people lived in the log houses at different times, and it is not possible to identify the politics of all its inhabitants.

Nevertheless, entering the village from the west, one first

encounters Henry Onstot's cabin. In 1836 he voted for Stuart, Lincoln, and the other six Whig candidates for the lower house. The Trent brothers' cabin to the south was full of Democrats. Alexander, Henry, and William Trent voted for May and, with one exception, for the Democratic candidates for the lower house. Alexander Trent, a veteran of Lincoln's company in the Black Hawk War, split his ticket to vote for his old captain. Joshua Miller and John A. "Jack" Kelso married sisters and lived in a double house north of Onstot's cooper shop. Both men were Whigs. Martin Waddell, the hatter, lived next door to Miller's blacksmith shop. Waddell was also a Whig. To the south of these residences lay Robert Johnson's cabin, Isaac Guliher's cabin, and Mentor Graham's schoolhouse. Johnson, a wheelwright and cabinetmaker, voted Whig. Guliher did not vote; perhaps he had moved on from New Salem. Graham lived outside town, but he came to town to vote for Stuart, Lincoln, and five Whig candidates for the lower house. He also voted for Thomas Wynne, a Democrat, for the state legislature.

Isaac Burner did not vote in New Salem in 1836. Alexander Ferguson, who had succeeded Peter Lukins as the local shoemaker, was a Democrat. The town's leading businessman Samuel Hill, Dartmouth-educated Dr. John Allen, and Dr. Francis Regnier were Whigs. The rest of the cabins on the east side of town were shops except the old Herndon cabin, the occupants of which in 1836 are unknown.

The Myth of the Clary's Grove Boys

The other New Salem precinct in 1836 was less solidly Whig. Lincoln got 50 of its 76 votes, but May edged Stuart, 40 to 34. In this area of Sangamon County, Lincoln's personal popularity did triumph over local political preference. The names of the voters at this unlocated poll include many of those associated with the Clary's Grove, Concord, and Sandridge areas.

A special mythology surrounds these residents of New Salem's outskirts. The "Clary's Grove boys," as they are called, were representatives of what some historians call the



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 2. Joshua Miller's reconstructed blacksmith shop in New Salem.

first frontier. They were rough, fun-loving, and boisterous men of rather unsteady habits. Lincoln, the artisans, doctors, and businessmen of New Salem were men of the more settled second frontier. Lincoln's ability to capture the friendship of the Clary's Grove boys has always gained considerable attention from his biographers. First, it really was important. As members of his company in the Black Hawk War in 1832, the Clary's Grove boys had a hand in Lincoln's first political success: his election as captain of the unit. Second, the way he gained their respect—the famous wrestling match with Jack Armstrong—is the anecdotal stuff of which readable biographies are made. Unlike some important events, this one offers the bonus of making a good story.

Finally, Lincoln's friendship with the Clary's Grove boys has been the focus of much attention because of the peculiar importance of the American West to historians in the period when much of the great writing on Lincoln occurred. In the 1890s, Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier thesis" identified American democracy and individualism with the West. The frontier was supposed to be the cutting edge of the experience that made America, America and not a pale imitation of the European culture from which most Americans stemmed. For Lincoln to capture the hearts and minds of the Clary's Grove boys was vital to the process by which he maintained his status as the ideal American statesman to most historians. This showed that, despite Lincoln's choice of the law as a vocation and his political and personal friendships with bankers and businessmen, he was linked to the vital experience that forged American democracy.

Scholarship has moved on since those times, and the frontier experience has greatly diminished in importance in the works of American history. The residue of this once important story remains in Lincoln biographies. Oscar and Lilian Handlin's recent *Abraham Lincoln and the Union* notes that Lincoln was "Equally at ease with the boys in the Clary's Grove gang and with the Reverend Cameron." A more important book, Stephen B. Oates's fine *With Malice Toward None: The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, carries the idea a bit farther. Describing Lincoln's campaign for the legislature in 1836, Oates says, "On the campaign trail, Jack Armstrong and the Clary Grove boys sang Lincoln's praises and helped keep order at his political rallies." Oates merely states explicitly what is implied in most of the Lincoln literature that preceded his book.

Jack Armstrong may have campaigned in 1836, but he did not vote, either in the state election in August or in the national election in November. And the Clarys were certainly Democrats. John, Spencer, and Zack Clary voted in the New Salem precinct in 1836. Spencer and Zack voted for William L. May and for the seven Democrats seeking seats in the Illinois House. John Clary split his ticket, voting for Stuart, Lincoln, and three other Whig aspirants to the legislature as well as for four Democrats running for the legislature. The Clarys voted in the poll outside New Salem. The other families associated with the Clarys have never been precisely identified, and the Clarys and Armstrongs may not have spoken for all the "boys." Nevertheless, this is not the stuff of which loyal campaign workers are made, and it seems almost certain that the Armstrongs and Clarys were no part of Lincoln's canvass for the Illinois House of Representatives in 1836. Politically, Lincoln was much more at home on the streets of New Salem than in Clary's Grove.

Whigs and Democrats in the Developing West

New Salem was solidly Whig. In the Presidential election the following November, the town's voters gave 65 votes to Hugh Lawson White and only 34 to Martin Van Buren (only one poll book for the precinct exists). Dr. Allen, Caleb Carman (at whose house, probably the Trents' former home, the poll was located), Robert Johnson, Jack Kelso, Lincoln, Joshua Miller, Dr. Regnier, and Martin Waddell voted for White. Alexander Ferguson and the Trents (who had apparently moved outside town) voted Democratic. Mentor Graham, who also resided outside New Salem, voted Whig.

Lincoln left New Salem for Springfield before the next election. In 1838 he again ran successfully for the Illinois legislature. New Salem had changed. Its citizens shared with most other residents of northwestern Sangamon County a



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FIGURE 3. New Yorker Martin Van Buren's lack of popularity in the West spurred Whig organization in 1836.

desire to form a new county with, of course, a new county seat. Lincoln and the rest of the Long Nine, busy with internal improvements bills and the drive to move the state capital to Springfield, were unresponsive. New Salem's residents registered their dismay at the polls in 1838. The Whigs lost ignominiously. Lincoln led the Whig candidates for the lower house of the legislature with a paltry 31 votes out of 122 (almost double the total of any other Whig candidate for the Illinois House but not even a third of what the Democratic candidates got). Even Lincoln's local popularity could not overcome the disappointment of New Salem's citizens. John Todd Stuart, who was immune from the county-division conflict in Washington, ran ahead of Lincoln with 39 votes but well behind his Democratic opponent, Stephen A. Douglas, who gained 81 votes. A few remained faithful to Lincoln (Waddell, Kelso, Carman, Miller, and Graham), but even they split their tickets, usually voting for Democrats for the other legislative seats. Feeling for division of the county all but obliterated party regularity.

Lincoln was gone from New Salem by then, and his popularity and that of the Whig party in the rest of Sangamon County swept him to victory anyway. It is the experience before 1838 that is important, and it really is important. This is not a quaint exercise meant to add some of the bright color of partisanship to your next tour of New Salem State Park, though lack of attention to party politics is a notable failing of historical reconstructions, which usually ignore partisanship for the sake of a bland patriotism. This is a step in the reconstruction of Lincoln's early political environment.

That environment is looking more Whiggish every day. We know that Lincoln's father was a Whig and that his cousin was a Whig. We now know that the village in which he chose to make his independent way in the world was Whig. There is no anomaly in Lincoln's affiliation with the Whig party. The tendency to associate the frontier with democracy and democracy with the Democratic party is a hangover from the days when the West was thought to be the key to the American experience. Lincoln was a son of America's frontier, all right, but the West was politically and socially complex. When Lincoln moved to New Salem, he left his Whig home for a Whig town.

Lincoln's First Speech Quoted In Journal Story

During the political campaign of 1864, The Journal published a story in which it quoted what purported to be Abraham Lincoln's maiden political speech. The story said:

"The President of the United States made his maiden speech in Sangamon county at Pappysville, (or Richland) in the year 1832. He was then a Whig and was a candidate for the legislature of this state. The speech is sharp and sensible. To understand why it is so short the following facts will show: first, Mr. Lincoln was a young man and timid; second, his friends and opponents in the joint discussion had rolled the sun nearly down. Mr. Lincoln saw that it was not then the proper time to discuss the questions fully, and hence he cut his remarks short. Probably the other candidates had already exhausted the subjects under discussion."

The editor acknowledged indebtedness to William H. Herndon for the reminiscence and for the text of the speech. It was as follows:

"Gentlemen, fellow citizens: I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln. I have been solicited by many friends to become a candidate for the legislature. My politics are short and sweet, like an old woman's dance. I am in favor of a national bank. I am in favor of the internal improvement system and a high protective tariff. These are my sentiments and political principles. If elected, I will be thankful; if not, it will be all the same."

